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THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER IN LOUISIANA.

BY GEO. G. BEYER.

ABOUT three years ago I was engaged in Franklin Parish, Louisiana, on certain archæological investigations, but having considerable time to spare, I also took some notice of the bird-fauna of that section of the State, without establishing, however, any special records worthy of notice, with the exception of certain reports of the occurrence of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campyphilus principalis*) in an almost inaccessible swamp, which extends from the most northern portion of Franklin Parish, between the Tensas River and Bayou Maçon, to Black River. All efforts to obtain verification of these reports were unsuccessful at the time, but upon my return to North Louisiana last July, a gentleman handed me the dried head of a female Ivory-bill, informing me at the same time that, owing to the long-continued drouth, he could guide me to the spot where he had shot it and had seen several others.

As the locality was far removed from any human habitation, it became necessary to fit out a regular camping party, and a few days after I started for Big Lake, a large body of water in the midst of a heavy cypress swamp. The borders of the lake as well as the banks of some of the larger cross-bayous are heavily

timbered with ash, oak and elm. In some of such localities are the homes of the Ivory-bills, and from them they do not appear to stray very far, in fact, I was assured that the range of a pair of these birds does not extend more than a mile from their nest.

As soon as we approached the vicinity of Big Lake we could hear quite frequently the rather plaintiff but loud cry of the 'Log-god,' for such the bird is called by those acquainted with it in that section of the State.

The accounts of the habits of this species seem to be considerably at variance. Audubon, for instance, states that the Ivory-bill is never silent, but utters his cry at almost every moment of the day, and then never while on the wing; he furthermore says that it never excavates its nest in a dead tree. On the other hand the late Captain Bendire quotes from one of his informers in his monumental 'Life-histories of North American Birds' exactly the opposite. In the paragraphs referred to, Mr. McIlhenny observes that the Ivory-bills are exceedingly silent, and that he had never heard them excepting when in flight.

From the observations made on our hunt after these birds, I found Audubon's statement correct in so far that, if unmolested and not alarmed, they are certainly noisy, and by their oft-repeated cry we became accustomed to locate them. But when Audubon states that they never build in dead or even dying trees, he certainly was mistaken, for I took one pair with one of their progeny (a young male fairly well feathered) from the nest situated in an old and nearly rotten white elm stump, a little over forty feet from the ground. The entrance to the nests never seems to be as circular as that of other Woodpeckers, but is a little wider than high; moreover, this appearance is greatly augmented by the peculiar and ingenious way of slanting the lower edge of the hole for the purpose of shedding the rain, which otherwise would occasionally beat in. We found and examined several nests, but noticed only one, about twenty-five feet from the ground, in a living over-cup oak. The excavation, however, was rather small, being only a trifle over nine inches deep and eight inches high. We might, in this instance, have doubted the identity of the nest but for the fact of finding two body feathers of an Ivory-bill among the sawdust in the bottom.

Of the breeding habits I could not learn anything at the time, except that I believe only one brood is raised, and that the old birds continue to feed and care for their young long after they are able to take care of themselves. It was then near the middle of July, and old and young birds were still together, and the attention of the old ones was too entirely taken up by the young to have a chance of preparing for a second generation.

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker, in Audubon's time fairly common, is now fast disappearing, and I doubt the existence in our State of another locality where it could be found at the present day, and even in that swamp where I hunted them, they are not uniformly distributed but are confined to two or three localities in the vicinity of Big and Hog Lakes.

Our hunt was quite successful, as I obtained seven specimens in fairly good plumage. The old pair which I found with one of their young in the nest, I mounted with all their belongings. As stated before, this nest was located about forty feet from the ground, and the entrance was nearly hidden by the leaves of the poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*) which had totally covered the lower portions of the old stump. The entrance measures exactly $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height and $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches in width. The cavity itself is only nine inches deep and seven and a half inches in height.

The bottom of the nest was covered to the depth of about an inch with fine wood chips and rotten wood dust. The interior was very clean, and every sign of excreta and other household debris had been carefully removed. There was but one young one about, and it remained in close vicinity of the entrance, notwithstanding that it was almost fully feathered and able to fly. Both parents were still feeding it.